

## Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 161808

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, NATO, US

SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF COMMAND OF ALLIED FORCES TO SACEUR

REF: (A) USNATO 2915 (NOTAL); (B) MNCS ALERT SYSTEM

(S1-B/72), DTD 7 DECEMBER 1973, SUBJECT: "MNCS

ALERT SYSTEM, CHANGE 2--LETTER OF PROMULGATION;"

(C) SHAPE LTR 1210.1/20-3-2/74, DATED 7 FEBRUARY 1974,

SUBJECT: "STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH NATIONAL  
AUTHORITIES ON THE MNCS ALERT SYSTEM."

1. REF A RECOMMENDED THAT WASHINGTON RECONSIDER ITS POLICY

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CONCERNING TRANSFER OF COMMAND OF US FORCES TO SACEUR AND

RECATEGORY RELATED MEASURES, PREFERABLY TO CATEGORY I (SUBJECT TO US APPROVAL IN THE DEFENSE PLANNING COMMITTEE), BUT AT LEAST ACCEPTING CATEGORY II LEVEL AT SIMPLE ALERT CONTINGENT UPON ACCEPTANCE OF SIMILAR CATEGORIZATIONS BY NORWAY, ITALY, AND DENMARK.

2. IN APRIL 1974, THE UNITED STATES REVIEWED CHANGE 2 TO THE MAJOR NATO COMMANDERS ALERT SYSTEM, REF B, AND THE STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS, REF C. THE US POSITION ON THE CATEGORIZATION OF THOSE ALERT MEASURES RELATED TO TRANSFER OF OPERATIONAL COMMAND/CONTROL OF US FORCES TO NATO COMMANDERS REMAINS UNCHANGED. DURING THIS REVIEW AND REASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL POSITION, THE INTERESTS OF THE NATO COMMANDERS WERE GIVEN MOST SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. IN THE US VIEW, THE

TRANSFER OF OPERATIONAL COMMAND AND DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES ARE THE TWO MOST SIGNIFICANT MEASURES IN REINFORCED ALERT. UNDER THE STATED NATO CONCEPT OF THE STAGE OF SIMPLE ALERT, THESE MEASURES ARE NOT PROPERLY SIMPLE ALERT ACTIONS. MC 67/3 ESTABLISHES SIMPLE ALERT AS "THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE ATTAINMENT OF THE COMBAT READINESS OF ALL NATO FORCES AND RELATED ACTIVITIES" WITH ACTIONS IN THIS STAGE "CONSISTENT, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, WITH THE REQUIREMENT FOR DISCRETION" AND LIMITING ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT "COMPROMISE OPERATIONAL PLANS OR INITIATIVES CONTEMPLATED OR IN PROGRESS AT THAT TIME IN THE POLITICAL FIELD." BY CONTRAST, REINFORCED ALERT IS DEFINED AS THE SECOND STEP AND THE STAGE WHICH "SHOULD RESULT IN THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE DEGREE OF READINESS OF NATO FORCES."

3. WE FULLY APPRECIATE THAT AT SOME POINT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TENSION, UNITY OF COMMAND WILL BECOME IMPERATIVE. IF THIS POINT IS REACHED BEFORE THE COMMAND OF US FORCES HAS PASSED, FLEXIBILITY IN THE SYSTEM PROVIDES FOR A MAJOR NATO COMMANDER TO OBTAIN CONTROL OF THESE FORCES EITHER BY REQUESTING APPROVAL OF REINFORCED ALERT OR REQUESTING TRANSFER OF OPERATIONAL COMMAND AS AN INDIVIDUAL MEASURE, EVEN BEFORE THE DECLARATION OF SIMPLE ALERT.

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4. WE APPRECIATE SACEUR'S DESIRE TO ACHIEVE THE GREATEST POSSIBLE UNIFORMITY IN THE TRANSFER OF COMMAND. HOWEVER, THE POLICY FOR TRANSFERRING COMMAND TO THE MAJOR NATO COMMANDERS CAN BE EXPECTED TO VARY AMONG ALLIED COUNTRIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAY THEY PERCEIVE THEIR NATIONAL INTERESTS. THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES IN DETERMINING THE US POSITION WERE FIRST, AS A WORLD POWER, THE UNITED STATES MUST MAINTAIN A HIGH DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY WHICH

DIFFERS FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF OUR MORE REGIONALLY ORIENTED EUROPEAN PARTNERS, AND SECONDLY, OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE INTENT OF THE SEPARATE STAGES IN THE ALERT SYSTEM. LIBERAL CATEGORIZATION OF MEASURES BY OTHER NATO COUNTRIES DOES NOT ALTER THE INTENT OF THE STAGES OF THE SYSTEM NOR, IN OUR VIEW, SHOULD IT BE REGARDED AS A MEASURE OF THE SINCERITY OF THE NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO NATO JUSTIFYING THE TRANSFER OF OPERATIONAL COMMAND OF US FORCES AT SIMPLE ALERT. INGERSOLL

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